

Integration & inclusion (I): Jihadism in EU

Now is the right time for the West to engage with civil society - including the Copts, youth and women- in Egypt, according to expert **Dr. Walid Phares**, speaking at a European Parliament breakfast meeting organized by EIN (European Ideas Network) to discuss **integration, inclusion and Jihadism in the EU** on 9th February 2011. The program was organized under the leadership of MEP Jaime Mayor Oreja, chairman of policy at the EPP

Dr. Phares a co-Secretary General of the Transatlantic Legislative Group on Counter Terrorism (TAG) together with Guillermo Martínez-Casañ, EIN Network Director, emphasized the need to engage with opposition groups as a priority in both Egypt and Tunisia. He said that a potential Coptic party in Egypt will be one of the largest democratic movements in the country and he urged MEP's to invite them to Brussels and begin the process of engagement.

Dr. Phares said that the role of **young bloggers in the popular opposition movements that are sweeping across the North African/Middle Eastern region should not be underestimated**. He advised MEP's to reach out to them in addition to political opposition groups. He said that there are many ways for the European Parliament and various interest groups to work with young bloggers, including engaging on a forum-to-forum or NGO-to-NGO level. Bloggers have been instrumental in many of the most recent demonstrations in countries in the region, including, critically, in the post-election protests in Iran in 2009.

Dr. Phares said the US Congress is planning to invite liberal Tunisian Muslims, Egyptian Copts and young bloggers to testify to its committees in the coming months. He underlined the importance of the need for support to be given to grassroots activists, both individuals and organizations, that are engaged in activities on the ground that empower young liberal Muslims within European societies so that they can speak on behalf of the silent majority. It is critical to engage with such activists, Dr Phares said, because they are often isolated and alone it's with one another as well as with European and national politicians (further information on the programme can be found.

Much of what is currently taking place in the countries of North Africa was predicted by Dr Phares in his book '**The Coming Revolution: Struggle for Freedom in the Middle East**', published in December 2010.